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15 Nov. 1949

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OFFICE OF SPECIAL OPERATIONS

Washington, D. C.

MEMORANDUM FOR: ASSISTANT DIRECTOR FOR POLICY COORDINATION

SUBJECT: Albanian Operation.. Col. William MacLean - B.K.I.
Conference in Italy

1. During the evening of 11 November 1949, Colonel William MacLean met Prince Marka Gjoni and Ernest Keliqi for a conference at the Fagiano Restaurant in Rome. The conference lasted until 4:00 A.M. 12 November 1949. Colonel MacLean made the following points:

- a. A schism exists in the Free Albanian Committee over the selection of a new Committee president. The Balli Kombetar members on the Committee are insisting on the selection of a Ballist as President. However, according to MacLean, there is no Ballist available with whom the non-Ballist members of the Committee will cooperate.
- b. MacLean advised that the British would like for the Free Albanian Committee to include all Albanian anti-Communist parties, but that the United States is supporting the Ballists exclusively and the United States is responsible for the nomination of the Ballist to the Free Albanian Committee.
- c. Sajd Kryeziu is the kingpin of the entire Committee since its objective is the overthrow of the Hoxha regime and this objective can only be obtained by a close cooperation with Tito. MacLean further pointed out that even though the Kryeziu family is in bad repute in Albania, Sajd Kryeziu is a strong candidate for presidency of the Free Albanian Committee since he is acceptable to Tito.

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- d. Abas Ermeni and other left-wing Ballists are Marxists, but they are being supported by the Anglo-Americans because they seem young, able and active.
- e. During conversations between MacLean and Sforza, Count Sforza expressed to MacLean Italian distrust of any policy which will lead to Yugoslav domination of the Straits of Otranto.
- f. The B.K.I. was omitted from the Free Albanian Committee because the B.K.I. seemed to be compromised by the presence of ex-Fascists. MacLean commented that it was possible such policy might be revised in view of the need for the strengthening of the Free Albanian Committee.

2. During the conversation MacLean appeared to be interested in learning as much as possible about Marka Gjoni's attitude towards the other Albanian leaders. He gave the impression of desiring to judge Marka Gjoni's ability to cooperate with the other leaders if he was asked to join the Free Albanian Committee.

3. Marka Gjoni advised MacLean that he should broaden his (MacLean's) contacts among influential Albanians, since MacLean's knowledge of Albanian emigre groups is antedated.

4. In response to various MacLean questions, Marka Gjoni also made the following points:

- a. An Albanian revolution could and should be effected by nationalist organizing of an internal revolt. To the Albanian people an overthrow of Hoxha, managed by Tito, would merely mean the exchanging of one Slav tyrant for another. Marka Gjoni pointed out that such a solution would result in continuing bloodshed and instability in the country, and in turn would reduce its value as an anti-Communist bulwark.

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- b. The Free Albanian Committee should be reorganized into a non-political Military Action Committee taking direct orders from the Anglo-Americans. Such a Committee, being non-partisan, would have much more support both abroad and within Albania than the present one. Marka Gjoni pointed out further that such committee would be much more effective in action.

5. MacLean stated that he personally agreed with the above advice of Marka Gjoni and stated that he would submit it to his superiors in London upon return there on 15 November 1949. MacLean further stated that many mistakes were made in organizing the Free Albanian Committee since the job had to be done in a hurry. He promised to broaden his contacts among Albanian leaders abroad, and expressed the hope that he could meet with the President of the B.K.I.

6. For your information the above conference took place in one of the most public spots in Rome with Keliqi as French-Albanian interpreter.

7. The above approach to the B.K.I. is astounding in the light of your memorandum of 21 October 1949, Subject: "Ismail Verlaci." The conference places the United States, not the British, in the position of opposing B.K.I. and will no-doubt result in B.K.I. belief in British sponsorship if its members are subsequently included on the Committee.

8. You will also note MacLean's comments with reference to a future conference with Verlaci, and you will recall that in the early part of July Verlaci, after an approach by Abas Kupa, requested an opportunity to present his official credentials and personal good faith to an American, if an American actually exists, in connection with formation of an Albanian Committee.

9. Please refer to cable (OUT-85087) as to the answer given Verlaci. MacLean has now not only confirmed to the B.K.I. that the Free Albanian Committee is jointly sponsored by the United States and England but also that its purpose is to overthrow the Hoxha Government. Apparently he has also conferred with Sforza as to the purpose of the Free Albanian Committee. We would appreciate any information which you may now have or which you may receive in the future concerning the MacLean-Sforza or MacLean-Marka Gjoni- Keliqi conferences.

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Assistant Director
Special Operations

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